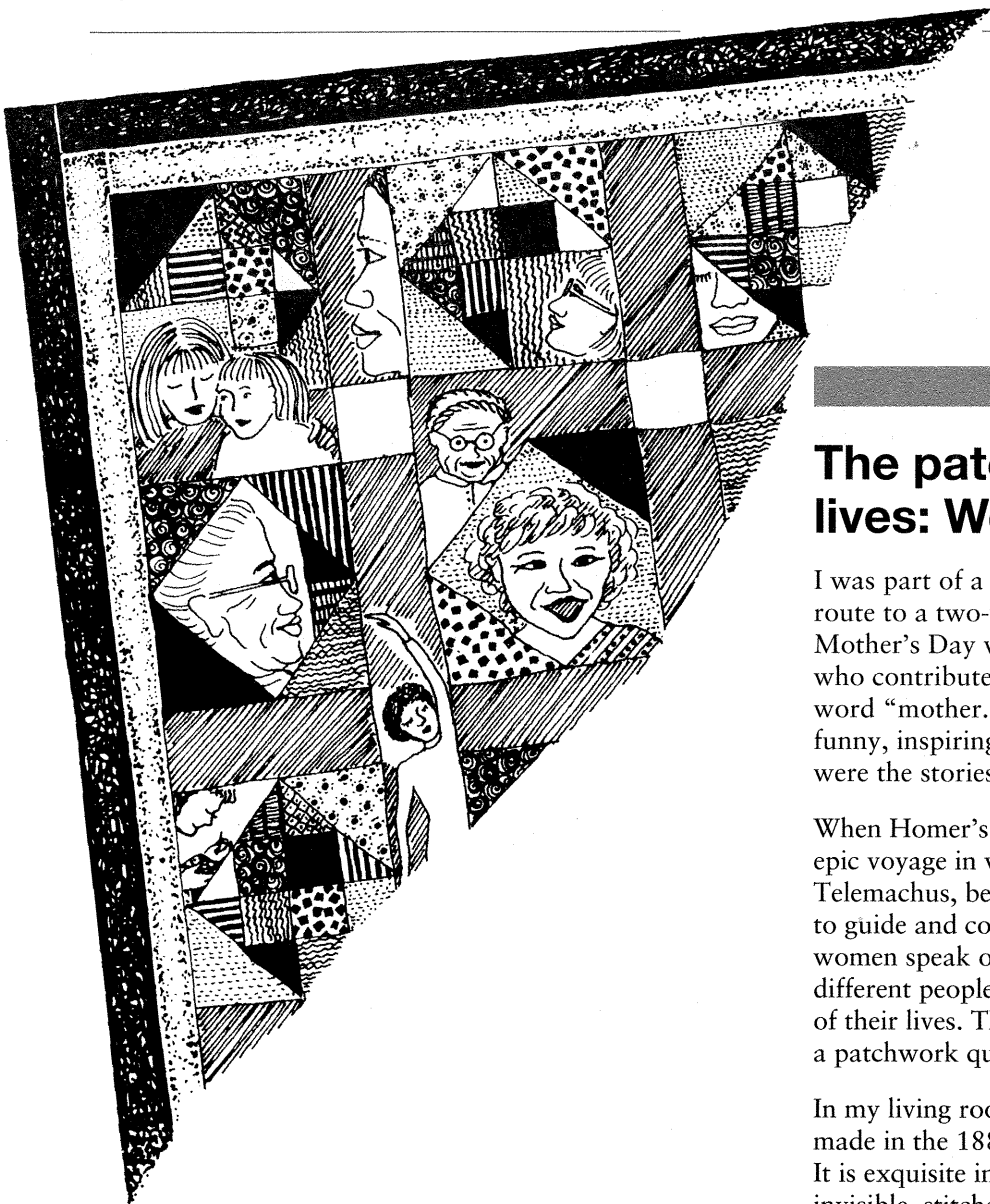


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# Women's Concerns

Report



## The patchwork quilt of our lives: Women and mentors

I was part of a group of North American women en route to a two-week study tour in Central America. On Mother's Day we were asked to share stories of women who contributed to our lives in the best sense of the word "mother." The stories that emerged were touching, funny, inspiring and at times tinged with sadness. They were the stories of our mentors.

When Homer's Odysseus prepared to set out on an epic voyage in which he would need to leave his son, Telemachus, behind, he asked his trusted friend, Mentor, to guide and counsel the child in his absence. When women speak of their mentors, they identify many different people who have guided them in various aspects of their lives. These aspects are pieced together much like a patchwork quilt.

In my living room hangs a remnant of one such quilt made in the 1880s by my great-great-grandmother. It is exquisite in its simplicity, made with tiny, almost invisible, stitches creating patterns and texture. It is all that I know of her, this creative, careful, patient woman. But it is enough to know that through the years she and so many other women have created objects of beauty out of the shared fabric of their lives.

I simply cannot take to a needle and thread, and my attempts at sewing have been limited to buttons and hems. But like my great-great-grandmother, I, too, am creatively and carefully and (sometimes) patiently putting together the quilt of my life from fabric shared with me by many women. Her quilt is all the more precious to

me because it has reached me over the distance of time. Many of the women who compose my quilt are all the more precious because they have been with me over many years and miles. It is to these women—sisters in the Lord, clients, therapists, neighbors, coaches, women who have walked with me over many years in this journey, and those who have only briefly shared in my life, women who have chosen to love me and to be loved by me—that I dedicate this issue of *Report*.

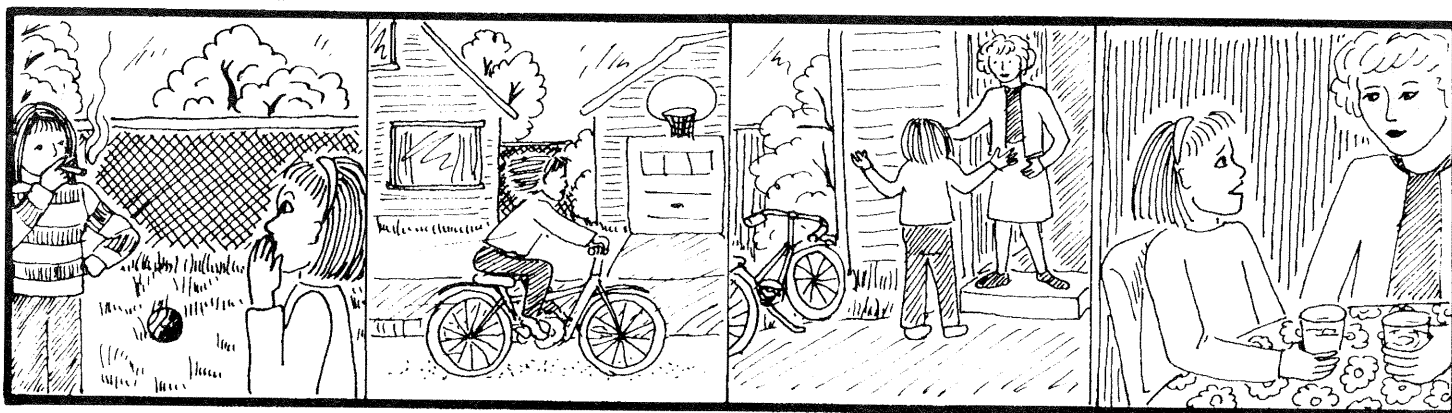
In piecing together this *Report*, I have included a number of quotations from children ages 5–13 who are part of the local church that I attend. I told them the story of the origin of the word “mentor.” I also shared with them the story of one of my mentors, my fourth-grade Sunday school teacher, Mrs. Lambeck. Mrs. Lambeck was a wonderful older woman who encouraged us in her gentle way to memorize a Bible verse each week. She also made herself available to listen to our problems and concerns. I took her at her word when I found one of my peers smoking in our backyard. I peddled my bike a mile to her house to tell her about my concern. She invited me in for a glass of lemonade sweetened with her total attention. I don’t remember exactly what the content of that conversation was, but I do remember the process of being

listened to and encouraged, valued despite being “just a little kid.” I carry a love for that process with me to this day, in my personal and professional life. The comments that the children in my church gave after these two stories show their awareness of mentors in their lives.

Throughout the pages that follow, you will hear stories of women who represent much of the life span as well as diverse geographic and professional backgrounds. Most are women I consider mentors, women I am honored to know. I have been touched by their lives as well as their stories. I hope that this issue of *Report* will touch you in a similar way.

—Anne Findlay-Chamberlain, compiler

**Anne is a mental health counselor. She attends the New Vision Brethren in Christ Church in Waukesha, Wis. She enjoys reading and spending time with friends and nature. She and her husband, Rod, have two adult sons.**



**"Sometimes an emotional outburst required descriptive words that it seemed were acceptable to God only in German. If we children attempted to use the same word in English, we were sternly warned never to say that again."**

by Frances F. Hiebert

## Mentor/mirror for myself

The term "mentor" was not commonly used when I was growing up. I can't think of anyone who was my mentor in the formal way we use the term today. I can, however, think of women I admired who became role models for me. They were mirrors that I held up to give me an image of what I wanted to become.

First, and most important, was my mother, Emma Grace Flaming. From her I absorbed a spirituality that was as natural as breathing and integrated with everyday life. There was no sacred time and secular time; no natural and supernatural. Her piety was a lifelong walking with God whether Mom was sewing clothes for us, putting a fine meal on for "company," or going to church. She prayed in everyday language about all the ordinary concerns of life. When tired at evening devotions, she often repeated "The Lord's Prayer."

Mom aired her emotions before us and God in an authentic way so that neither God nor we had to guess her mind. Sometimes an emotional outburst required descriptive words that it seemed were acceptable to God only in German. If we children attempted to use the same word in English, we were sternly warned never to say that again.

Although the church in her day assigned women the role of the biblical Martha, my mother was always interested in biblical and theological matters. She commented on the sermon over Sunday dinner, listened to radio preachers and read Christian magazines. She was a Mary as well as a Martha, and I'm sure that is one reason why Mary became a life-long role model for me.

Mom put a very high value on education. In this she disagreed with my father and those church leaders who believed that education beyond elementary school was unnecessary, especially for girls. As a teenager, her mother took her to enroll in a Mennonite Brethren high school. After seeing the school, however, Grandma changed her mind on the spot and took my mom back home. Mom was greatly disappointed that she never had the oppor-

tunity for formal schooling after the eighth grade, but she continued to educate herself by keeping up with what was going on in the world through radio, newspapers and magazines. When she met my father, she was a nurse's aid in a hospital where he came for an appendectomy. She sometimes regretted that she had not been able to go on into nurse's training.

My mother's positive attitude toward education and my father's negative one caused some conflict in me. I basked in Mom's approval for achievements in school, but I dreaded begging Dad for a nickel to buy a pencil or a tablet. Perhaps that is one reason why although I often started with enthusiasm, I found it hard to complete my



**"Summoning up my sternest tone of voice and borrowing the assignments my teacher recently had given our class, I taught high school English literature to students my own age."**

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school assignments. In any case, late bloomer that I was, I'm sure it was the value Mom put on education, in addition to my very supportive husband, that allowed me to finally complete a master's degree in theology.

After all of us children were in school, mother worked outside the home as a seamstress in a children's dress factory. She was doing what she loved. Fabrics, color, style and machine provided an outlet for her innate creativity. It was a love that she passed on to me.

My mother's five sisters also were examples of women who functioned in roles beyond that of wife and mother. This may have been mostly out of necessity. There were no sons in the family and my grandfather was in poor health for most of his life. He homesteaded on red clay land in southwestern Oklahoma. Their first home was a dugout in the side of a hill. My mother and her sisters worked in the fields as children and teenagers. Later they made their way in the world as best they could.

Aunt Marie married a red-dirt farmer. He was a tobacco-chewing armchair philosopher who would rather talk than farm. Aunt Marie, round and stacked like a *zwieback*, was full of humor and mostly accepted life on the terms it was given her, but there was no doubt that she was a full partner in the farming operation. I spent several weeks with them in summertime. She baked the most wonderfully soft-white-inside, crusty-brown-outside bread I have ever eaten. It was a world of wonder for a little girl who had always lived in town.

My favorite aunt, Mattie, worked as a clerk in Woolworths after her two daughters were in high school. I'm sure the extra money came in handy, but I think she also enjoyed being out with other people and having an identity outside the home. I remember how she regaled us with stories about the customers who shopped there and the politics that went on among the employees.

Aunt Tilly was a hairdresser. She had a wonderful and often wacky sense of humor. We used to sit diagonally parked on main street in the little country town of Cordell, Okla., watching the people go by. She had a comment to make about them all and often illustrated it by mimicking their facial expressions. Aunt Tilly had been married, but she divorced her abusive husband.

I only became aware of this family secret when I was older and she was happily married to Uncle John, but perhaps because of her example I never questioned the right of a woman to leave an abusive husband.

I learned a negative lesson from Aunt Dorothy. She married a philanderer and stuck with him through thick and thin. When he tried to take advantage of me in her absence, I learned how to protect myself. After her husband died, she became the mistress of a married man. I saw from both her attachments how the desperate need for a man could diminish a woman's whole existence into a fixation on one relationship.

And then there was Aunt Hannah, the schoolteacher. What a character! She never married, earned a master's degree in education, taught high school and sold insurance. I think she must have been some kind of early feminist because she actually enjoyed putting a man in his place. Aunt Hannah didn't realize all her ambitions. One was to be a musician, and even with her church-sized, electric organ and the grand piano from the Black Forest in Germany she couldn't accomplish that. But she never gave up. She believed that you should keep trying to be all you want to be even if it's not what you were meant to be. And she believed that you never knew what you could do until you tried.

I will never forget her taking me out of school in my senior year to substitute teach for her several days. I was thrilled and terrified at the same time. Summoning up my sternest tone of voice and borrowing the assignments my teacher recently had given our class, I taught high school English literature to students my own age. I was overwhelmed with the nine dollars a day she paid me, and I never asked what Aunt Hannah did or where she went while I taught her classes. It gave my self-confidence a boost in several ways: She had faith in me, and I actually accomplished the task.

Individually these women were models for me, but when these six sisters together took on a cause, it was something to see. Talk about woman spirit rising and the

**"Men normally called their wives by name, but women almost always called their husbands 'Daddy' or 'Dear.' I decided as a 12-year-old that I would call my husband by his name although, at that age, I couldn't have expressed the reason in terms of it being a sign of equality."**

power of sisterhood! For example, in a day when medical professionals ranked only second to God, these sisters could terrorize a whole hospital if a family member was in for treatment. They roamed the halls, quizzed doctors and nurses, and freely offered their own diagnosis and prescriptions.

My siblings and I often referred to mother's sisters corporately as "the aunts." In a way, all of them together with their own unique characteristics and undying loyalty to each other became a composite role model—The Aunt.

Another woman who was a significant role model for me was the mother of my best friend. Ethyl Asfahl and her husband started a children's dress factory in our town. There was no mistaking their equal partnership at work and at home. Her daughter and I were inseparable for several years during junior high school, so I was often in her home and observed the mutual respect between her mother and father. One thing that impressed me was that Ethyl Asfahl addressed her husband by his first name, Raymond. This was unusual in our small-town, middle-class society. Men normally called their wives by name, but women almost always called their husbands "Daddy" or "Dear." I decided as a 12-year-old that I would call my husband by his name although, at that age, I couldn't have expressed the reason in terms of it being a sign of equality.

We now have much more explicit terminology to express the influence of other people in our lives. I believe, however, that there have been women in most of our lives whom we have looked up to as models, sometimes without even realizing it. I am thankful for the ones I have described here and many others who have been mentors for me.

**Frances has been a speaker and writer in the areas of missiology and women's issues. She has been a member of the Board of Mennonite Brethren Missions and Services and has served as Chair of MCC US Committee on Women's Concerns.**



by Kathy Glick Miller

## a second gift of life

driving through our woods in the late afternoon

I turn the last corner and see her,

bent over, back to the sun,

hands in the soil of her garden

she has four, really:

two flower gardens flank the house

among the blossoms are paths

laid out of stones carried in her strong gloved hands

west of the house are two vegetable gardens

straight rows of green interspersed with colored blooms

she let us touch the earth and tiny seeds

plant our own gardens

watch the light green shoots grow deep emerald and jade

see the blossoms turn to cucumbers and kohlrabi

I join her in a patch of sweet peas

side by side we pull weeds

give the tendrils room to grow

**Reprinted from *Blossomings*, a collection of poetry by Kathy Glick Miller, Pinchpenny Press, Goshen College, Goshen, Ind.**

"We would make the tea and then sit for a few minutes drinking it and talking. I'm not sure how much intellectual stimulation my mother got from those daily talks with a 4- or 5-year-old, but I do know that they were a positive part of my emotional development."

by Kathy Glick Miller

## Afternoon tea and unconditional love

Many women have been influential in my life: teachers, friends, characters in books (both historical and fictional). However, the most important and influential woman in my life is a woman I know not from words on a page but from personal interaction. My mother, Helen Glick, has touched my life as no character in a book could; she gave me what I know is unconditional love, letting me grow and blossom under her warmth.

One of my fondest memories from early childhood is drinking tea with my mother each afternoon. The tea itself was nice, but the better part was choosing the flavor. Mother had jars of tea leaves and spices lined up in a closet just at my eye level, and every day she let me choose what the flavor or flavors of the day would be. We would make the tea and then sit for a few minutes drinking it and talking. I'm not sure how much intellectual stimulation my mother got from those daily talks with a 4- or 5-year-old, but I do know that they were a positive part of my emotional development. Because of that time spent with my mother each day, I knew that I was important, that I was interesting and that I was loved.

Growing up, I was a voracious reader. I admired and identified with many of the women I read about. I believe that reading about women and girls doing interesting, meaningful, important things let me grow up with the view that it is good to be female and that I can do and be whatever I want to do and be (if I am willing to expend the required amount of effort). Not only was I reading about women, but I was reading books and stories by

women. Knowing that many of my favorite authors were women gave me an added measure of confidence because I enjoyed writing stories. However, the biggest reason I continued writing was more concrete: I was encouraged. I was always a bit amazed at my mother's reaction to my efforts because she was genuinely impressed. She didn't just tell me that she liked a story because that is the appropriate parental response to a child showing something she's done. She reacted honestly. And with a child's strength of perception, I recognized and appreciated that honesty.

Mother encouraged me to do more than just write. She always asked that I (and my brother and two sisters) do whatever I chose to do wholeheartedly. Looking back on my childhood, I was not always happy with her for that expectation because I didn't always want to work that hard. However, such expectations from my mother gradually became ingrained in my own consciousness. I knew that my mother was proud of me when I did my



best, and I didn't want to disappoint her by doing anything less. I saw the strength and commitment that she had and tried to emulate those characteristics.

For four years of my childhood, until I was 9, my family lived in Bolivia. My mother and father were the MCC country representatives, and Mother would take me with her on trips into the countryside to visit MCC workers stationed in various, often remote, places. We rode buses, trucks and horses and often simply had to walk. I didn't know at the time how valuable such experiences were, providing me with an education that enriched what I was learning in school. During those trips, I never had any doubt about my mother's capabilities. I imagine that she had doubts and fears from time to time in a position of responsibility for about 75 people, but I don't remember seeing any.

When we returned to the United States, my parents gave a series of presentations in churches about their time in Bolivia and MCC's work there. Soon after we settled into life in Holmes County, Ohio, my church was left without a pastor. My parents became part of the pastoral leadership team until we invited a full-time pastor to the church. During that time, I got used to seeing my mother in the pulpit, leading worship, preaching and directing programs. As I grew older, I learned how intimidating public speaking was for her. Knowing that it was not easy for her, I admire her skill in public speaking even more. She continues to speak in churches and before groups many times a year.

My mother is an amazing woman. Each year she plants and tends to three or four gardens, growing both flowers and vegetables. She is an accomplished seamstress, having made for me over the years a snowsuit, a baptism gown, two formal prom dresses, a jacket and various other items as well as a beautiful wedding gown. She has shared jobs with my father for most of my life, giving me a role model who was able to spend a considerable amount of time at home with me as well as showing me a woman with a successful career. She supported me and my siblings in our activities during school, going to volleyball, basketball and soccer games, plays and band concerts. Next week she will be visiting Goshen College for a few days,



recruiting for MCC. During that time she will attend my last home college varsity volleyball game, completing 11 years of attending my games.

While in Goshen, she will stay with my husband and me in our apartment, giving me a chance to repay her in a small way for the years that she invested in me during my childhood. It is an honor and a joy to have such a woman in my life, a woman whom I love and who I know loves me. I hope that I can live as she lives, giving strength to others through a life lived fully and well.

**Kathy is a senior English major at Goshen College, with a TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) minor. She is married to Craig and is the daughter of Bruce and Helen Glick. She enjoys swing music, reading books and writing stories and poetry.**

"I have loved and needed old women most of my life. One of the sorrows of aging is that I have lost so many of the old women in my life."

by Ruth Krall

## Oh, there's something about the women in my life

"So big and beautiful  
She sets my heart on fire  
Like a raging river in the moonlight of the dawn  
She's the mother of my youth  
She's the daughter of my age  
This woman, now and always  
Survival is her name."

from "Something About the Women" in *Singing for Our Lives* by Holly Near (Oakland, CA: Herford Music), 45-46.

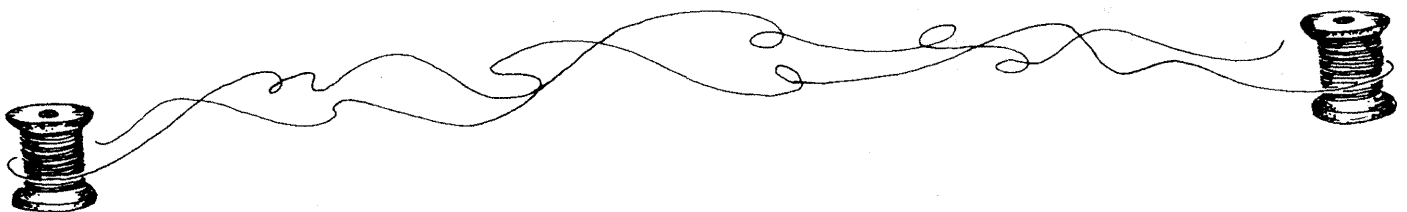
From childhood into adulthood, I have been surrounded by women who are important to me. Some of those women have passed over; some have aged gracefully, some resentfully; some linger only in wisps of memory; some served me as secretaries; some I served as a clinician or a teacher; some were friends of my childhood; some entered only for a hesitant moment; some I met when I most needed female wisdom for my life; some are the center and some are the margin.

In paying tribute to one woman, I pay homage to all the women who guided me in understanding what it means to be a woman. In recalling one woman in particular, I set her life in the context of the lives of all the women who have loved me and cared for me. I set her life in the context of the lives of all the women I have loved and cared for.

This kind of female loving is complex. In some relationships we are mothered; in others we are sistered; while yet in others we are the caretakers. However, in most of my relationships with beloved and loving women, there is a thread that carries us through our sufferings as women and brings us hope. This is the thread of shared conversation and laughter. Many of my closest women friends and teachers have been present in my life for long stretches of time. A few, however, walked in, introduced themselves, sat down for a moment, and then left me, forever indebted to their gifts and presence.

Nelle Morton was one of the latter. I do not remember the day that I met her nor do I know how she decided to admit me into personal friendship and love. I had no idea who she was before we met. She was, quite simply, one of the old women. And I have loved and needed old women most of my life. One of the sorrows of aging is that I have lost so many of the old women in my life. I find myself becoming an old woman and wonder, "Who is to be my teacher here? How am I to find my way without a teacher?"

I was a mid-life student engaged in doctoral studies in theology. All of my previous work life had been circled around clinical training and practice. Yet somewhere within, a voice spoke softly that it was time to move into a study of women and theology. When I was 40, I moved into an academic community where I knew no one at all. Leaving behind the life I knew as mine, I set out on a journey. I hoped I would find a community of women where I could establish a new trajectory of skills and dreams.





**"A neophyte in theological thinking, I brought my teacher, John Bennett, the only gift I knew was mine—a willingness to search what he taught and what I thought I knew so that I could find truth of some kind."**

**"On Sunday mornings, she would come to my apartment and settle into an ancient, ugly plastic armchair and it became sacred space because of her wisdom."**

I sat in courses that first semester and worried that I'd made a huge mistake in my life plans. So much of what I needed to study originated in male experience. Yet, I was happy to be a student. And, in books I sought out women to be my teachers.

In my introductory ethics course, I wrote feminist analysis of ethical issues. A neophyte in theological thinking, I brought my teacher, John Bennett, the only gift I knew was mine—a willingness to search what he taught and what I thought I knew so that I could find truth of some kind. He was teaching his last full semester of his academic career.

It was he who opened the door to meeting the wise old women of Claremont. John and Anne Bennett and Nelle Morton were a trinity of old people. Each was retired and living in Pilgrim Place—a United Church of Christ retirement village. Each had an independent life of service and scholarship. Yet, so often they were together in a closely knit friendship. Three years ago in John's memorial service in Berkeley, all three people were invoked as needing to be mourned together. So closely tied in friendship and work were they.

I am sure John introduced me to Nelle, after reading my first graduate papers in theological ethics and recognizing my feminism. But I do not remember the introductions or first times of being with each other. I did not court the relationship. In those first months of study, I was overwhelmed with what I'd done to my life and was simply present to my teachers and classmates. I had no thought of building a broader community for myself. Yet all three entered my life and helped me build a community of friends. But it was Nelle whom I learned to love and who loved me in return.

Nelle was retired from the faculty of Drew University. I learned that she'd taught the first feminist analysis course in any United States seminary or theological school. I learned about her journey from a somewhat mild but antagonistic anti-feminist stance into feminist analysis. I learned of her conversion into loving women, into loving herself. Much of this can be read in her book, *The Journey is Home*.

In one of the miracles of doctoral studies, Nelle entered my life for a short time and brought me a world. This world was the world of feminist scholarship in theology and religious studies. She knew everyone and she loved to introduce people to others. Her hospitality was generous and her spirit engaging. I learned that she loved being loved. My spirit simply opened to hers. I would visit her home and we would sit and talk for hours at a time. I arrived carrying flowers or chocolates or exotic beverages and I left with my spirit filled. On Sunday mornings, she would come to my apartment and settle into an ancient, ugly plastic armchair and it became sacred space because of her wisdom.

As our friendship deepened, I realized that Claremont, because of Nelle, had become a mecca for women seeking to know and love themselves as women. In her presence young women graduate students blossomed into active scholars. She wanted to read our papers and gave us her work to read.

It was also clear to me, because of my clinical background, that Nelle was nearing the end of her life. She became more and more physically frail even as her spirit soared larger and larger. When I left Claremont for Costa Rica, I said to the community of women, "No matter where I am in the world when Nelle dies, I want to be part of the women's community here when it says its goodbyes to her."

Nearly seven years after I met her, Nelle died. I returned to Claremont for her memorial service. It took place in a garden I'd introduced her to—a beautiful garden on the Scripps College campus. Women of all ages and stations in life met together and memorialized her life. Not only the women living in Claremont were present. Letters had come to this community from women in Europe, Asia, and other academic locations in the United States. Well-known academic women and unknown women all met in this holy space of love for her. I'd been asked to be one of the eulogists.

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**"No matter where I am in the world when Nelle dies, I want to be part of the women's community here when it says its goodbyes to her."**

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I never wanted to exploit my love for Nelle nor her friendship for me. Only a few Claremont people were aware that she and I spent time together each week in conversation and debate. Even fewer knew that we corresponded regularly.

I didn't know in such a gathering how to speak. I waited quietly while invited and spontaneous eulogies flowed. Then, as if from springs deep within me, I knew what I needed to say. My gratitude to Nelle was not because she loved me. My gratitude to her was because she allowed me to love her. This was the tribute I gave her: "I loved her because she allowed me to love her. And in that reality she changed my life."

As an old woman, she changed my life and healed wounds so ancient they had no names. And she did this by a simple willingness to be loved. I loved her passionately and love her still. She gave me such rich intellectual gifts as she gently guided me, but she gave me the greater gift of a listening presence. She helped me move into speech from silence.

Sensing in her personal spirituality that God was a great ear at the center of the universe, she spoke for herself and her journey. But she also listened with such care and love to other women in their speaking that the center of the universe became present and opened into full daylight. And the Holy One was present there.

When she died, I wrote to *Christian Century* and *Christianity Today* asking if I might write a eulogy. But other women, more famous than I, were already writing about her immense contributions to feminist analysis and feminist theology in the United States. Now, centered within the denomination of my childhood and family, I write of her in memory and love. She was one of those pivotal women in my life—a woman who split open a world and shared it with me.



Ruth is a professor of religion and psychology and the Director of Peace Studies at Goshen College. She received her Ph.D. after completing doctoral studies in theology and personality at Southern California School of Theology at Claremont from 1981–1984. Her doctoral dissertation was on "Rape's Power to Dismember Women's Lives: Personal Realities and Cultural Forms." Her most recent sabbatical was from 1995–1996 at Graduate Theological Union Berkeley focusing on the topic "Liturgy as Healer/Liturgy as Destroyer."

**"These women have been my mentors, pathfinders in the richest, purest, most direct sense. Over and over they have gently pointed me to God when I could not see past the misconceptions, the lies, the scars from the abuse and from life."**

by Peggy Mumper

## Gently pointing me to God

"Tutor" is too scholastic.

"Scout" has me contemplating old westerns.

"Pathfinder" elicits charming possibilities. Mentors are people who have assisted me in locating the path, usually when it was directly in front of me. "Supporter, guide, coach, advocate"—all these terms make my heart beat a little faster, bring smiles of hope and remind me that I don't have to face this world alone.

What friends, what incredible women God has placed strategically through my life! I am amazed, as I reflect on these 40 years, where I have found mentors, those who offer comfort, love, encouragement, physical affection, affirmation and gentle guidance.

Long before I met this God, I encountered Mrs. Plappinger, who guided me into her first-grade class when I arrived as a new student halfway through the school year. Mrs. Plappinger taught me to reach out to someone who is frightened and overwhelmed and facing the terror of the unknown. She simply asked if there was anyone in the class who lived near my new house, on my new street. Kathy Morlath shyly raised her hand, and Mrs. Plappinger led me to a seat beside her. Kathy became my best friend, and Mrs. Plappinger had helped me find her. That is similar to how I met God, through a friend who led me in His direction, during my senior year of high school. He is a clever God, isn't He, full of irony and subtle teaching?

Jeannie was another compassionate pathfinder. I met her at the church I began attending in high school after I became a Christian. I helped with her kindergarten Sunday school class, where, of course, I was learning right along with the 5-year-olds about God's love and caring. But outside that classroom Jeannie taught me even more. The summer after my freshman year of college, when my first love had dumped me and my heart was broken, Jeannie invited me to her home. I walked in the door and she hugged me. The hug was warm and tight and intended for me. She guessed the root of my sorry state and held my hand while I blubbered all over her couch pillows. Jeannie didn't try to persuade me that all was for the best, that I'd find some one else, that life would go on.

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She just cared. She simply listened and held my hand. Jeannie taught me that God is discerning, and He gives people a glimpse into the hurts around them for His purpose, to bring comfort. Love is often about being present, sitting with those who ache.

Jerry was a woman I knew for two years when I lived in Terre Haute, Ind. She disciplined me using a study book and a Bible and much tea and conversation. She loved her husband and her grown children and the people in her church. She made meals for other families, wrote encouraging letters and sang in our little choir. Then she got cancer. She and her husband moved away to be closer to their children before she died, but while she was with us Jerry taught me the honor of serving the people who gather every Sunday morning to worship God.

Many people teach us about death, usually when it is thrown into their midst and they must come to grips with it. A little girl named Tori, a friend of my daughters, taught me death is about grief and hope and remembering

and keeping the good pieces inside you. Tori's death moved my daughters and another friend to poetry and song and laughter and tears. Tori's mother has shown me that death is holding God accountable to His promise to abide, to comfort, to shelter when nothing can ease the pain. And Tori's young sisters have taught us that there are reasons to get up again, that there is love and a future and more joy ahead.

These lessons, and most of the profound messages we come to grasp, are inexorably linked to time spent together, to fumbling around in the darkness of loss, to reaching out to see if one person's hurt is remarkably like another's.

Nine years ago I began the process of recovery from childhood sexual abuse. By word of mouth, and the choosing of the Holy Spirit, five of us, all survivors of abuse, came together to talk and walk this portion of road together. We leaned on each other, tripped over each other at times, wept and laughed and carried each other's burden for a part of this journey. Three of us and a fourth friend who joined us five years ago still meet every month. These women have been my mentors, pathfinders in the richest, purest, most direct sense. Over and over they have gently pointed me to God when I could not see past the misconceptions, the lies, the scars from the abuse and from life.

Perhaps this is mutual mentoring. We each have times when we are struggling. We have faced illness, death, family struggles, crises of faith, loss of hope, financial

### **Women in ministry**

**Brent and Teresa Cummings** were installed as Mennonite Brethren youth pastoral couple in Dinuba, Calif.

**Tony and Maryann Randall** were installed as pastoral couple of Silver Lake MB Church in Freeman, S.D.

**Rocky and Kelley LaMarr** serve as pastoral couple of Western Oaks MB Church in Bethany, Okla.

difficulties and job stresses. We have celebrated personal growth, healing within families, experiences with God, physical healing, birth and loss. Nothing is too big or too small for us. We make sure that each person has her time to share, and we guard that time for each other. Sometimes we pray together. We have even studied together, but mostly we listen and we talk.

Mentoring is one more gift chosen for us by a loving God. Certainly Jesus modeled mentoring. He walked and taught and listened and endured all of this physical life with special friends, male and female. He came to them with the joy of salvation. He brought comfort in their losses. He sought their friendship when He was hurting. When his physical life ended, Jesus left them with another mentor, the Holy Spirit. And he prayed that we would follow the path he found for us.

Occasionally in life we realize the heroic deeds of those we love, those whose lives teach us quietly, by example. Their deeds are piled about us in great heaps of tears and love and devotion, but we have meetings to attend, houses to clean and jobs that dictate our priorities. Often we fail to honor or acknowledge the mentor sitting next to us in a pew, standing beside us at our daughter's soccer game, or mowing the grass on the other side of the fence. Amazingly, through grace we are transformed by these deeds, and these are our mentors anyway.

**Peggy lives with her husband, Mike, in New Cumberland, Pa., and is a member of the Harrisburg Brethren in Christ Church. She and Mike have five children and they'd like to believe they are mentoring them in many positive ways. She is a home-schooling mom, currently on sabbatical, and a writer.**

## **Who is your mentor?**

It would be my teacher last year. I really wouldn't have gotten through my seventh-grade year happily without her. The summer before seventh grade was probably the worst summer of my life. When I needed someone to talk to she was so willing to give up her spare time. She'd pray with me if I needed it. She was a real loving person who went through difficulties in her own life. She's a real good example, and I hope to be as good a listener and advice-giver as she is.

—Sarah, 13

I really look up to my parents because they have raised me in a Christian home. They have been good influences. They don't fight all the time like some people, and they work out their problems. They try to direct me and my sister in the way we should go even if it sometimes doesn't seem like it. I know they are trying to do what's best for me.

—Becky, 13

The person that really influenced me was my older sister. She would listen to me, and I could talk with her and not be afraid that she'd tell anyone if I didn't want her to. She sometimes would give me advice.

—Josh, 12

I have a cousin that I really, really adore. She helps me with my homework, and she helps me with problems that I have. One day I came home and found her in the back of the garage smoking and I didn't feel too good about that because I don't want her to get lung cancer or anything. So I went up to her room and talked to her and she stopped smoking a couple days later.

—Michelle, 11

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**"One of the women I admire is Queen Esther, because she took the chance of going to the king when she wasn't called which was, like, a big no-no."**

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My favorite woman in the Bible is Ruth. She gave up everything she had to follow Naomi because she knew her God was real. Even when the other girl went back to her city like Naomi told her to, Ruth followed Naomi. She was just faithful to her and didn't give up even though she knew it would be hard. She wanted to do what she thought was right. She showed a lot of character when she went to help Naomi and left her city and all of her people.

—Becky, 13

One of the women I admire is Queen Esther, because she took the chance of going to the king when she wasn't called which was, like, a big no-no. You can get killed for that. But she didn't care because she wanted to save God's people.

—Sarah, 13

My Mom, my sister and my dog. And my Uncle Chris and my other grandmother who lives next door.

—Victoria, 5

I only have one mentor and that's my Sunday school teacher Lori.

—Stephanie, 9

I like my Mom and my Dad 'cause they help me learn more about Jesus.

—Sarah, 8

My dog helps me. My dog goes crazy when I walk in the door.

—Anna, 9



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## News and verbs

Goshen College is accepting applications for a **position in U.S. history** and a **position teaching electronic media production, reporting, journalism, editing and public relations**. Those interested in either position should contact Dr. Paul Keim, dean, at 219-535-7503 or <dean@goshen.edu>. Information available at [www.goshen.edu](http://www.goshen.edu).

The **Inaugural Conference of the Global Women's History Project** at Westfield State College will take place on April 15–18, 1999. This Conference will bring together 20 women who play key roles in the peace-making process from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and from Palestine and Israel. Joined by women activists, students, teachers and academics from the United States, the conference is designed to provide opportunities for the exploration of women's organizing strategies as they struggle to cross nationalist divides and influence the larger political realities of their regions.

The Global Women's History Project provides an opportunity to make the term "global village" a reality. The conference is free of charge and open to all. For a complete Conference Program or to learn more about the Global Women's History Project contact Dr. Catherine Shannon, Westfield State College, 413-572-5345 or <Cshannon@wisdom.wsc.mass.edu> or Dr. Elise Young, 413-472-5343 or <elise@javanet.com>.

## New books

*Women and Men: Gender in the Church* (Herald Press, 1998) was commissioned by MCC Women's Concerns (Canada and US) to encourage dialogue in the church around the issues where faith and gender meet. The past decades have seen huge shifts in the way women and men relate—what is the church's response? The book, edited by Carol Penner, is aimed at both women and men and doesn't make the assumption that all readers will know what feminism is or why discussion about gender is important. Divided into 13 chapters with discussion questions, it lends itself to a Sunday school discussion group. The book sells for \$9.99 US or \$14.25 Cdn.

The table of contents follows:

1. Gender in the Old Testament by Wilma Ann Bailey
2. Gender in the New Testament by Adelia Neufeld Wiens
3. Gender and Sex Differences: Real or Imagined? Ken and Irma Fast-Dueck
4. Homemaking and Careers: Cooking the Ordinary Soup of our Everyday Lives by Eileen Klassen Hamm with Les Klassen Hamm
5. Living in our Created Bodies by Karen Schlichting and Aiden Schlichting Enns
6. Physical and Sexual Abuse: Violence in Gender Relationships by Carol Penner
7. A Black Woman's Voice by Regina Shands Stoltzfus
8. Gender and Aging: Male or Female—What Difference Does it Make? by Katie Funk Wiebe
9. The Church is not Noah's Ark: Singleness in the Church by Miles Zimmerly Wiederkehr
10. Mothering and Fathering: The Change in Us by Wes Bergen and Carol Penner
11. Raising Nonsexist Children by Atlee Beechy
12. Youth and Gender Relationships by Joan Yoder
13. Gender in the Church by Frances Hiebert

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WOMEN'S CONCERNS REPORT is published bimonthly by the MCC Committees on Women's Concerns. We believe that Jesus Christ teaches equality of all persons. By sharing information and ideas, the committees strive to promote new relationships and corresponding supporting structures through which women and men can grow toward wholeness and mutuality. Articles and views presented in REPORT do not necessarily reflect official positions of the Committees on Women's Concerns.

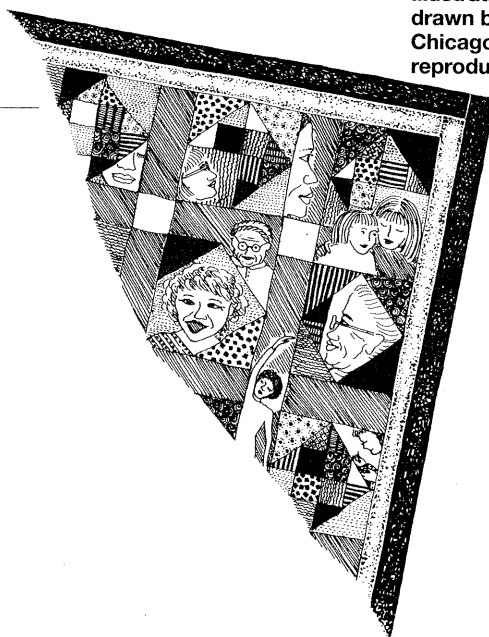
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*Sexual Offending and Restoration* by Mark Yantzi (Herald Press, 1998) provides new methods for dealing with the pervasive problem of sexual abuse. Yantzi shows caring ways to confront and support those who have offended and calls for understanding and compassion toward those victimized by sexual wrongdoing. His unique approach is illustrated through case examples and candid dialogue between victims and offenders. Readers hear authentic voices and share in the process toward healing and growth. This book honors the words of victims, offenders, their families and communities. It is available for \$12.99 US or \$18.75 Cdn.



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